

Written Testimony of
John Garcia, Immediate Past President
Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents

Senate Bill 254, An Act Restricting the Application of Fertilizers that Contain Phosphate

Environment Committee
March 7, 2012

Good morning Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, Senator Roraback, Representative Chapin and the distinguished members of the Environment Committee my name is John Garcia, I'm the Immediate Past President of the Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today regarding **Senate Bill 254, An Act Restricting the Application of Fertilizers that Contain Phosphate**.

I am here today to ask that golf courses be exempt from this proposed legislation. As proud and aware steward of the environment, we agree that phosphorus eutrophication can be a severe issue in the degradation of Connecticut's rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes. Steps should be taken to identify the sources of excess nutrient leaching and measures put into place to limit this where it makes sense. However, we are yet to see any viable research correlating the proper fertilization of golf courses with excessive phosphorus loading in our bodies of water.

Phosphorus is one of the three "macro-nutrients" required by turfgrass, and is utilized in holding and transferring energy for every metabolic process within the plant. Phosphorus is critical for the germination of new seedlings as well as the development of cell membranes, particularly in the roots of the plants. Once established, supplemental phosphorus applications are reduced and only applied as needed in most cases, typically when over-seeding, or recovering from damage from some other pest. Phosphorus is very immobile, and binds to soil particles very quickly once applied, and therefore rarely has the opportunity to move freely on or under a turfgrass surface. It is for these reasons that most researchers believe that the majority of phosphorus loading is due to miss-application, such as accidental application to paved areas, and the erosion of soils that are rich in "bound up" phosphorus. In fact, the EPA, recommends that farm land incorporate turfgrass buffers adjacent to water bodies to limit erosion of bare soils, thus limiting phosphorus eutrophication.

A recent industry study showed that nearly 90% of Golf Course Superintendents have received a college degree, with the vast majority majoring in Soil Science, Agronomy, or Turfgrass Management. These professionals pride themselves on nurturing the properties that they maintain, respecting and enhancing the environment that they work in, and maximizing the resources of their employers. The judicious use of plant protectants and fertilizers is imperative to maintain turfgrass vigor, playability, and performance. Annual testing of irrigation water quality, soil testing to determine deficiencies, and tissue testing analysis are all integral parts for developing the management programs for nearly every golf course in our state. The fertilizers available to golf courses today are of the most advanced and high quality fertilizers in the world. These products and the people that develop and sell them help the Superintendents utilize Best Management Practices, specifically to deliver the right product, at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place. This provides for optimum plant health, protects the environment, and maximizes the financial resources of our owners and members.

So in closing, I would again like to ask that you exempt the golf course industry from this proposed legislation. We would like to partner with the DEEP in the near future to create a comprehensive "Best Management Practices for Golf Courses" document. This document would be an all encompassing resource outlining what most golf courses are already doing, and providing strategies for others to improve upon the practices that they already have in place. Our industry is proud of our environmental stewardship, and believe that we are the model for the rest of Connecticut's Green Industry.

Again, I thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak with you today.